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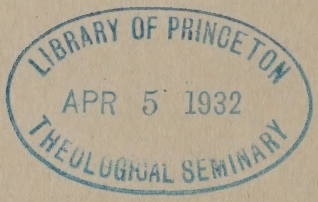

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Religion, whence and whither

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WHENCE AND WHITHER

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BY THE
REVEREND CLIFTON MACON, D. D.

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DEDICATION

TO THE MEMORY OF THE LATE ROBERT BRUCE OF DUNDEE AND SAN FRANCISCO THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

FOREWORD

This is a book for laymen, written by a student with a profound experience of life and a ripe understanding of the problems which face thoughtful people who love the Bible, who find in the Church a means of grace, and who at the same time are puzzled by the present unrest in the world of religious thought.

We are in the midst of another Reformation, projected by the scientific research of the nineteenth century. Old foundations have been shaken and many a beautiful tower of spiritual fancy has fallen to the ground. Both within and without the Church, this spirit of unrest is manifested. The problem before the modern preacher may be expressed in a sentence: How far can a churchman hold his place as a steward of the mysteries of God and at the same time be loyal to his intellectual convictions?

There are many people who say that sermons ought not to be disquieting in their character. Religion, they urge, is not a matter for argument but of experience: "Faith is the substance of things

hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," and the minister has no right to communicate either his doubts or his conclusions to a congregation hungry for the bread of life. He should feed them from the old pot of manna and not attempt to break this new bread of an evident new convenant with God.

On the other hand, the Church seems to be losing her hold upon the thoughtful young. The new psychology, the new historical criticism, to say nothing of the new science predicated by the challenging discoveries of Einstein, have wrought confusion among the children of this generation. They are as spiritual as their fathers, but they are honest and will not make a truce with intellectual dishonesty. They demand a religion that is historical, scientific, experimental.

Doctor Macon, in this little book, has undertaken to meet a situation that calls for honesty, freedom, reverence and unshaken convictions. The following lectures are admirable in their simplicity of style, their clarity of thought. They are revelations of a well stored mind, consecrated by a noble passion for loyalty to the Master Christ. A strong churchman and a commanding preacher of the gospel, Doctor Macon enters the field of modern thought with kindly authority and reasonable argument. It is with pleasure that I commend this book to the great congregation of St. Bartholomew's Parish, and to

that still wider congregation of the world where men and women are looking eagerly towards the dawn.

ROBERT NORWOOD.

St. Bartholomew's Church,
November, 1929.

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INTRODUCTION

Religion is the most consuming subject in the minds of men. Man is truly a religious being. The railing that one hears against religion is sporadic and is simply a kicking against the pricks. Its persistence is like the love of God "that will not let us go." "Jeshurun," fed so freely upon the materialistic pabulum of today, may "wax fat and kick," but he finds no relief. As St. Augustine reminds us, God has made us for himself and we find no rest until we rest in him.

However, it is not easy for man to find his way in religion. The difficulties are numerous. One of them is due to the fact that the goal of religion is God, and "no man hath seen God at any time;" for God is everywhere, yet nowhere. To the seeker he is always a few laps ahead, just over the horizon which glows golden in his train. The desire for God is a consuming one, and it led the Psalmist to cry, "My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God. When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?" The hymn writer would

cheer the seeker on by words of realization voiced by those who have attained, singing:

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Behold I freely give
The living water; thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink, and live.
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him."

The second difficulty is that each one must be a pioneer. The road may be fixed and may lead directly to the desired goal, but the individual must start from his own position in the wilderness of this world, the City of Destruction, as Bunyan calls it, and find his own route to the great highway that leads to the City of Zion. He must not only find the road, but he must keep on it, and neither is easy to do. For Mr. Doubt and Mr. Discouragement, Mr. Cynic and Mr. Scoffer will often join the pilgrim as he plods along, and engage him with much plausible, diverting discourse.

Again, one's quest for religion becomes somewhat difficult because the documents bearing upon the subject are not easy to interpret. The Bible, though always the best seller, and most often quoted, is far from being self-explanatory. It needs much eluci-

dation by those who through long study and earnest meditation have become skilled in the interpretation of the text and the understanding of the history and mental furniture of its times.

In recent years the difficulty has been increased by the new learning in the material sciences and in Biblical interpretation. This has brought on the conflict between Fundamentalists and Modernists, punctuated by the Scopes' trial, and has led to the agitation for laws against the teaching of evolution in the schools.

Beyond the Bible itself, the seeker after the truth of religion is desirous to find out what place the Church holds in the scheme of spiritual development. He asks: What is the Church? How did it begin? How has it developed, and why is it as we find it to-day? As he pursues his investigation, he is confronted with the Creeds, and asks: Where do the Creeds come in? What relation have they to one's religion? To what degree are they a help, and to what degree a hindrance?

Undoubtedly, man, who is so patently a religious creature, who is always consciously or unconsciously seeking God, needs to have the experiences of other men as recorded in the Bible. And the efforts to meet man's need in a corporate way as expressed in the Church and the creeds should be placed before him in as simple and direct a way as possible. To

have the main facts secure in his mental grip helps him immeasurably. It gives him a confidence with which he may go on and build around them, or draw out of them his religious philosophy. Having done this, he will, as St. Peter counsels, "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh (you) a reason of the hope that is in you."

The lectures which follow flowed from the foregoing considerations and from many incidents in my life when men and women have expressed their desire for some simple treatise to guide them in their study towards an understanding of the Bible and the Church, and the things which they "ought to know and believe to their souls' health."

The wise man was unquestionably right when he declared that "Of the making of many books, there is no end, and much study is a weariness to the flesh." I disclaim all desire to add to that multitude, or to increase the weariness of the student. But when these lectures were delivered, some of the hearers asked that they be published. And oftentimes there came requests from the busy professional class and others who have not time nor training for the larger and more technical volumes on these subjects, but who are eager to know their outlines as well as the modern view in relation to them. These expressions form my chief justification for offering this book. But there is another justifica-

tion somewhat less personal. The preacher or lecturer is often conscious that very many who listen to him, even among the regular Church attendants, have an all-too-slender knowledge of these subjects, and that his references are not grasped because the hearer is unable to give them their proper environment. Melchizedek and Mesopotamia are names which charm the ear, but where they belong in the flow of religious history is a question which often puzzles many listeners.

The Bible, the Church and the Creeds are in a sense one subject which might be entitled, "The History of Our Religion." When that history is learned, a mental picture is formed which is so definite that whenever a particular reference is made, there is automatically registered in the mind of the informed hearer, its place in the religious landscape. Such a degree of information is greatly needed in the Church.

As already implied, my effort has been to sketch the picture only in outline. But I have the hope that it may lure some who view it even in its rough incompleteness, to fill in the details. I am also convinced that having done that, they will find for themselves great mental satisfaction and that their interest will inspire others to undertake the same enterprise.

CLIFTON MACON.

THE BIBLE—WHAT IT IS

CHAPTER I

THE BIBLE—WHAT IT IS

The need for understanding the Bible is due to the fact that nearly all of our religious ideas and convictions are derived from it. We are hardly conscious of how true this is, but a little reflection will convince us. Who does not recall that, as a child, the Bible story became part of his mental stock? His imagination kindled to the stories of Eden, the Flood, the Tower of Babel, the Plagues of Egypt, the Crossing of the Red Sea, Moses on Sinai, Samson and the Philistines, and David and Goliath. Then the New Testament brought to one the Child of Bethlehem, Jesus and his disciples, Gethsemane and Calvary, and the scenes of Easter Day. These stories have lost none of their charm with the changing years but are perennial in their power to thrill and inspire. How precious they are, millions upon millions of spirits on earth and in Paradise could testify, and their influence no human powers could possibly compute. For these reasons, therefore, everyone should at least know the Bible stories, and

should pass them on to the children for the enrichment of their lives and the culture of succeeding generations.

As one grows from childhood to maturity, one demands a philosophy of the Bible. He would know its authorship and the bearing it has upon his life. The story may be charming, enthralling, and it may automatically produce a helpful reaction, but very soon the mind demands particular definitions and an evaluation of the material. The first question usually is: "Is this story historical; did it really happen?" And the next: "Is it scientifically valid; was the world made in the way declared?" As a child, one believed it was without question but as an adult he cannot accept it. Then usually follows the question of ethics: "Was the action good or bad?" This will be quickly followed by the problem of the adjustment of deeds to personal character; that is, one has been led to believe that a certain person was good, noble and devout; yet he is reported as doing something or sanctioning something which is unbrotherly, anti-social, or shockingly wicked. Even God, himself, whom we have been taught to call Father and who is described as Love, is represented as countenancing and even commanding things which contradict such a character. One is therefore perplexed and distressed by conflicting statements about God and man. He is

desperately desirous of proving the good, but he is in despair as to how to disprove the evil. In this dilemma to read the Bible and to take it at its face value only confirms the fact that there are historical, scientific and moral inconsistencies.

What will one do in the face of these difficulties? One of two things. First, he may follow the line of least resistance, as millions do, and cease thinking. He will ignore the difficulties. He will stop growing and at the same time stifle all possibilities of real faith, accepting in lieu thereof a stupid, thoughtless credulity which means a willingness to believe a lie about man and God rather than disturb himself and work towards valid conclusions and a satisfying faith. One should remember that a single grain of real faith is of more value in the sight of man and God than tons of credulity. Credulity is only pardonable with children and the simple-minded. When it springs from fear or a lazy mind, it should be punished with the ban of silence when any matter of real importance is discussed.

The other position is to admit all the difficulties that lie on the surface, accepting them as a challenge to study the Bible with deeper earnestness and faith, in the endeavor to justify or explain the ways of God and man therein portrayed. In doing this, one will find the Bible to be of new and inex-

haustible interest, worthy of a life study, beckoning one on and on, even to that which is within the veil. He will then be led to search history, biography, science and theology, and his own inner experience, and all the while will have the companionship of some of the most earnest and devout men of today. Furthermore, he will be conscious of a spiritual alliance with patriarchs, lawgivers, prophets, apostles and martyrs. But chief of all will be the comforting consciousness of obedience to the counsel of Jesus, who said: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." [1]

It cannot be said too often that the Bible is not a composition but a compilation. No one author wrote it as a book, no set of men wrote it with the purpose of making a book. It was brought to the book form only to preserve the materials and to make them readily available for use. As Dr. Morris Jastrow and others have pointed out, the book is comparatively modern. So far as the Bible is concerned, it hardly ante-dates the Greek period 331 to 64, B. C. This is to many a startling statement. For in the popular mind of today all knowledge of ancient persons and events is associated with written records. We scarcely ever think of anything in the story of the past except as embalmed in liter-

[1] John 5: 39.

ary form. But that is to commit the very common error of attributing to an earlier age, habits and conditions of the present. The fact is that in many respects our present thoughts, customs and methods are the results of a progressive development extending over a very long period of time. So it is with the materials which constitute the Bible: they were fluid for several ages, held in the solution of oral tradition and not precipitated into the solid form of writing until the Greek period. The very small degree in which written records existed was only to provide an auxiliary to the oral as notes and memoranda for the customary oral statement. It is for us a curious fact that the Oriental was averse to the written word and distrustful of it, and for ages preferred and practised the oral means of perpetuating the treasures of the past. Among conservative people today there are sometimes found vestiges of that prejudice. Only a few years ago in Richmond, Virginia, a firm that made tobacco boxes employed an old negro truck driver to visit the tobacco factories daily and take orders for boxes. Although the boxes were of various dimensions and designs, he would never accept a written specification, saying, "If you tell me what you want, I will be 'sponsible and bring it but I won't trust your writin'."

We also need to be careful of our ideas of authorship, for there, too, we have ignorantly attributed to

the distant past comparatively late material. With us the book, the title and the author form a trifold unit. But for untold ages there was no such unity. A title requires the assembling of materials to justify it, and authorship implies an individual who has assembled or created the materials. In the old days, the stories of the past had not been collected and no one had been identified as the author of the current traditions. Dr. Jastrow is justified in his statement that, "The age of Greek literature may be said to have invented the author."

The question that naturally arises at this point is: "How did authorship, as we have it today, originate?" No one could answer the query more concisely than the writer just quoted, and these are his words: "The written form, when it arose in the ancient Orient, was not due to the promptings of the literary instinct or to an ambition on the part of certain individuals to be known as authors, but purely as a preservative method to prevent tales and traditions that no longer enjoyed a full spontaneous existence among the people from perishing or from being distorted. Writing begins when genuine production comes to an end. As long as a tale retained its full popularity, as long as a tradition formed, as it were, part and parcel of the life of the people, there was no urgent necessity to give the tale or tradition a written form. It lived in the hearts and

minds of the people. There was no occasion for the definite written form until with the advent of a new age with new interests and new problems, the tale no longer made its appeal, and the tradition was no longer living, the exhortation was in danger of becoming a memory, the law needed reinforcement, and the prayer through the development of the cult was embodied into a fixed ritual."[1]

Therefore, though we have in the Bible what looks to be a book, it is in fact a compilation, a library if you please, containing a great variety of materials. Not all are religious; e. g., Esther and Solomon's Song. They are arranged with very little historical sequence and manifest a puzzling lack of unity. The early part of the Bible comes from folk tale which was transmitted orally from generation to generation over a long series of centuries and was perhaps not committed to writing until the Persian period, the sixth century, B. C. Ignorance of these facts has caused great confusion. The several groupings of material have been called "books" and definite authorship has been assigned to them. The first five books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch, have been erroneously attributed to Moses, and men have fought bitterly to establish this view. The greater part of the other material composing the Old Testament has been divided up and

[1] Morris, Jastrow, Jr., *The Book of Job,* pp. 50 and 51.

ascribed to particular authors, involving us in equal absurdities.

Some say that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, when his alleged composition contains an account of his death and much subsequent matter. Therefore, he must have written in Paradise and sent his copy to earth for publication. To cite another case, we have attributed the whole book of Isaiah to the prophet of that name, and have fought one another about it, when upon examination we find that the book covers a period of three hundred years, while the span of man's life, then as now, seldom exceeded three score years and ten. The truth is the ascription of authorship to books of the Bible and to other compilations of ancient literature is comparatively modern. According to the old custom, the title of the book, even as it is today in the case of the title of Papal Bulls, is found in the initial words; Genesis is but the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Bereshith,* "Beginning," and Exodus originally bore the Hebrew title *Smemoth,* "Names." In Babylonia and Assyria books were written on clay tablets without titles because they lacked unity of authorship, the tablets being distinguished merely by numbers. Although the Greek period may be said to have invented authorship, yet at first anonymity prevailed also with the Greeks. For instance, the Homeric

poems were the work of many hands. Their composition was a gradual growth. Homer was simply the name of a Greek rhapsodist of pre-eminence.

The point of the foregoing is that there was no authorship such as we understand it. Furthermore, if there was simply the compilation of materials with little re-editing, if there was the freedom of elaboration such as is indicated, it is but natural that in the Bible there should be found conflicting statements and a lack of unity and chronological sequence. In short, the Oriental wanted a good story. If he found a fruitful theme, he did not hesitate to weave it to suit himself. Then we have elaborate pseudo authorship in which the name of some ancient worthy was given to a book to gain attention and recognition. This seems to have been true of Job, Jonah and Daniel, not to mention others.

One of the first features to be noted in the composition of the Bible is the duplication of its narratives. For instance, Genesis gives two accounts of the creation which are irreconcilable. In the first chapter, we read that God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man

in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." [1]

In the second chapter after the summing up of God's work of creation, and the statement that he rested from all his work, the narrative is resumed, and in it we find the declaration that there was not a man to till the ground. Therefore, "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Then follows the story of the creation of Eve out of the rib of Adam. In other words, the first and second chapters of Genesis contain independent narratives of the creation of the world, placed in immediate sequence by the compilers of those early folk tales.

This is shown not alone in the outward difference in details, as cited, but also in the interior structure. For example, the first chapter gives only one name for God—Elohim; the second chapter gives him a dual name—Yahweh Elohim, or as we translate it, Lord God. To the scholar that indicates a difference of documents, with a difference of historic time.

Of the other duplications, I shall mention but one—the introduction of David to King Saul. In the first account David is spoken of as being brought to Saul to relieve him of an evil spirit that troubled

[1] Genesis 1: 26-27.

him. In our language of today we would say that Saul was suffering from acute melancholia. But in relating the incident, David is described as "a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters." [1] In other words, a mature man in body, mind and experience. In the second account, which follows the slaying of Goliath, Saul is represented as being entirely unacquainted with David, and interrogates Abner as follows: "Abner, whose son is this youth?" And Abner said, "As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell." The king said, "Inquire thou whose son the stripling is." When David was brought into the kingly presence, Saul said, "Whose son art thou, thou young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of thy servant Jesse, the Bethlehemite." [2]

All of this means that when the folk tales of Israel were gathered for preservation by writing, they were arranged in a kind of sequence, not always chronological; for the second chapter of Genesis is earlier than the first, and the two incidents regarding David and Saul are also in reverse order. Neither is there any effort to make the statements harmonious. Therefore, it is plain that the Bible is not a composition, but a compilation.

To the Oriental the statement of the fact of an

[1] I Sam. 16: 14-23.
[2] I Sam. 17: 55, 56, 58.

occurrence seems to have been the chief thing; that is, God created the world and all that is in it; Saul and David were historically associated in a definite and interesting way, but the manner and the time do not matter. For the Orientals in that pre-literary age not only preserved their traditions by oral repetition, but they were exceedingly fond of stories concerning heroes and events. As to duplications of these stories, two accounts were better than one. They meant more to talk about; more food for the imagination. Why bother about agreement in details? The persons and the events were the essentials; the particulars, only the garnishments. We literal and mentally surfeited westerners can hardly appreciate the importance of the story to them. They had no books, magazines, or daily papers, no literature of any kind; of course, nothing comparable to railroads or stage coaches, telegraphs or telephones, or anything even remotely corresponding to these inventions. There was little human intercourse except between those of the immediate family or very near neighbors. Hence the story was the chief tie between the past and the present, and was the common stock in trade of the people. It meant man's book, library, history, science, magazine, theatre and drama. That being the case, we need not wonder that stories were amplified, multi-

plied and duplicated, and were often contradictory in particulars.

Now we come to the most important matter of all; namely, the ethical problem in the Bible. Before we can attain to an understanding of the Old Testament, to peace of mind, and to reasonable faith, we must relieve ourselves of the commonly held idea that the Bible contains the story of but two religions, the Jewish and the Christian. That idea burdens us with an ethical dilemma from which there is no possible escape. There are many things in the Old Testament ascribed to man and God, which we cannot reconcile to our simple ideas of decency; and our chief criticism of our Fundamentalist brethren is that in their demand for a literal interpretation, they allow no means of solution. If, however, they would extend their view beyond the English text, a very simple way out would be possible.

The Bible tells the story of three religions, and an understanding of the first of these is essential to the interpretation of the other two, as well as to our mental peace. It is a lamentable fact that many of our ministers, and the majority of our Sunday School teachers, have never detected the first religion. Therefore, they live and die in a maze of ethical contradictions. It would be amusing, if it were not pathetic, to observe the expedients to which they are sometimes driven in their dilemma.

For instance, an elderly clergyman, a saintly man, thus referred to the subject: "The Old Testament is so full of difficulties that I have made up my mind that the least said about it, the better, and therefore I seldom preach from its texts." Again, a layman, who was a teacher of a Bible class said, in the face of the same problem: "The Bible is hard to understand, but I have decided that this is due to our human limitations. In God's wisdom all that is seemingly contradictory is really harmonious, and when we come to God's presence, the dark valley of doubt will be exalted, and the rough places will be made plain." And finally, there are some present-day parents who have declared: "We wish our children to attend Sunday Schol, but we do not wish them to be taught the Old Testament."

Resort to such expedients does not commend itself to our intellectual self-respect nor offer hope of mental peace. It is equally futile to continue to retreat from facing the question squarely. Why not study the Bible, and thus be qualified to see clearly, state fearlessly and teach faithfully that the Bible contains accounts of three religions?

The first is the religion of Yahweh and is represented in that portion of the Old Testament which extends from Genesis to the literary prophets of the eighth century, B. C.—Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, et al;

the second includes the religious development from the time of these prophets to that of Christ; and the third is described in the New Testament. Thus, we have the religion of Yahweh, the religion of the Jews, and the religion of Christ.

The important point is that the first religion was crudely primitive and that Yahweh was simply the tribal God; the Hebrews were his only people, and he their only God. In their conception he was a God of power. Omnipotence was his chief attribute. No idea of ethics had as yet come into their conception, except the social ethics that were later taught in the Ten Commandments, the sphere of which was strictly limited to their tribe. Other nations could be exploited at will. The Egyptians could be deceived and tricked, despoiled and destroyed, without the question of right or wrong being involved. The Amalakites, because of one offense, were not to be forgiven but must be exterminated. Men, women and children, babes and sucklings must be slain by the command of God, through his prophets;[1] and whole tribes could, with violence, rapine and slaughter, be dispossessed of their lands, in order that they might be given to the divinely favored and chosen people.[2] And still no question of justice or mercy was involved. Why?

[1] I Sam. 15: 1-33.
[2] Joshua.

Because, according to that first religion, might was right. Yahweh was mighty, and the attributes of justice, mercy, righteousness and love, so familiar to us, had never been ascribed to him. With the absence of these qualities, and the belief that the heathen nations were not his people, he could do as he liked, and what he liked was at all costs to favor his people. With such views, there is no ethical inconsistency in what happened. The only inconsistency is that which exists between their conceptions and our Christian ideas of three thousand and more years later.

Accompanying this low idea of God, there obtained equally crude ideas of worship; animal, and even human, sacrifices must be offered to propitiate him. The roasting meat on the altar sent up fumes of "a sweet smelling savor" into the nostrils of Yahweh, and the blood of bulls and goats "delighted him." With such primitive views of God, there followed primitive morals, or lack of morals; for man never rises above his conception of his God.

With the coming of the literary prophets, there was born what I have termed the second religion of the Bible. Its birth meant a revolution in religious views, worship and practice. The prophets were the first heralds of Christ. Each of these inspired men took a leading part and made a permanent contribution in presenting God in his true nature.

Chronologically, Amos was the first. Amos broke away from the prevailing belief in tribal gods, declaring that he whom they called "Yahweh" was the One Holy Being whose dominion not only included Israel but also heaven and earth. Furthermore, he taught that Yahweh possessed other attributes than omnipotence; he was The Righteous One, and his people must reflect his character. Here ethics, human and divine, were born, or at least reborn. Then came Hosea who made one of the greatest contributions by proclaiming the new doctrine that God was of infinite tenderness and loving kindness. Therefore, we see in this prophet a true forerunner of Jesus.

Isaiah, in his turn, taught that the life of the people, in both worship and practice, must be harmonious with the nature of God. We might call him the prophet of the *consistent* life. Facing the religion of Yahweh, as he found it daily expressed, Isaiah, in ringing, radical words demanded reform. First, he attacked the empty formalism of worship, saying:

> Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.
>
> To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt

offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.[1]

Then, he addressed himself to the conduct of the people. For faith, worship, and conduct should be of a piece. He cried:

Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.[2]

[1] Isaiah 1: 10-15.
[2] Isaiah 1: 16-17.

To this great work, Jeremiah, Micah and Joel also make notable contributions. It had been taught that God was vindictive, that he pursued the sinner to the grave, and then punished his innocent children "unto the third and fourth generation," as is expressed in the concluding part of the Second Commandment. It is to the shame of the Christian Church that in spite of the protests of the prophets and the words of Jesus himself we have continued to teach that primitive libel on our Heavenly Father. Jeremiah and Ezekiel denounce it using almost identical words. Ezekiel proclaims:

The word of the Lord came unto me again, saying:
What mean ye, that ye use this proverb concerning the land of Israel, saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?
As I live, saith the Lord God, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb in Israel.
Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die.
The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.[1]

[1] Ezekiel 18: 1-4, 20.

It should be noted that these reforming and revolutionary prophets did their work so well that no one after them dared to ascribe cruelty and bloody violence to the Almighty. And he who does it today is disloyal to the light which the prophets shed upon the world, and to the teaching of Jesus. Shall we not take our stand with the prophets and with Jesus? Unfortunately those who demand a literal acceptance of the Bible would have us to be Yahwehites and Christians at the same time.

(The contributions of such teachers as Ezra, who came at the close of the captivity, or the sixth century, B. C., have to do chiefly with ecclesiastical organization and ritual requirements.)

The third religion in our sequence is the Christian. Its roots run as far back as Yahwehism, but it reflects the ethical and spiritual development which took place during the succeeding centuries. Of this final religion the New Testament tells the story, and even there we find critical difficulties, many of which are due to the oral method that continued in a large measure until our era. For not one of the Gospels reached its present written form until about a generation after Christ. During that period, what Jesus said and did was passed from mouth to mouth, though doubtless there were fragments in writing. And the Gospel of Saint John and the Book of Revelation were not written until towards the close

of the first century, possibly even later. In the case of the Gospels there was no intention of writing a book, or even a consecutive history or biography, but only brief statements of the experiences and the collected information of the Gospel writers. Therefore, it is natural that we should find statements not altogether harmonious, and in some particulars contradictory; for example, the accounts of our Lord's several appearances to his disciples on the first Easter Day cannot be harmonized.

Then, we must admit the elaboration that invariably characterizes stories which have been repeated over a long period of time. This tendency undoubtedly accounts for some of the difficulties that confront us in both the Old and the New Testaments. I am sure it has been with you, as with me, that a story we have heard, or an incident witnessed sometime in the past, has lost nothing in the telling. We unconsciously elaborate in order to make the main point carry home, and after a while we are unable to distinguish the elaboration from the original simple facts. This has always obtained, and its effects are quite evident in the Bible. Beyond that, legends arise about all historic personages. We have them in our own country concerning Washington, Lincoln, Roosevelt and Wilson. In such cases, there is no intention to falsify or mislead, or to exalt the character unduly, but only to impress the hearer

with some conception of his greatness. The same may be said to be true of biblical persons and events. Therefore, in reading the Bible, it is not necessary that we should feel that loyalty demands our acceptance of every story at its face value; the details are often inconsequential, and might be discarded without any discredit to the main fact. At any rate, scholars, devout men, sometimes find it necessary to place aside, as of no evidential value, elements which, in the past, have been most zealously and literally held.

One should understand that although a story may not be historical or scientifically sound, it may have other great values. This is certainly true of the first three chapters of Genesis, which in literary form and allegorical teaching, are priceless. The same is also true of parts of the New Testament, where, for example, one may find it difficult to establish the historical validity of the narratives of the infancy of Jesus; yet those stories have had an enormous power in making life sweeter and more tender, and they will always have that power regardless of their fate in the hands of critical scholarship.

The great purpose of the Bible is to reveal God, and man's relation to him. This revelation has come in various and sundry ways. It was that which the writer to the Hebrews had in mind when he said:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.[1]

Nothing is more apparent than the fact that from the beginning of the world there has been a progressive revelation or evolution, if you prefer. There is evolution in almost everything, certainly in plant life, animal life, literature, political institutions, social expression, and in religious thought. Whether one likes it or not, it is God's method of leading us to the truth, and we find it "writ large" in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation.

[1] Hebrews 1: 1-2.

THE BIBLE—HOW TO READ IT

CHAPTER II

THE BIBLE—HOW TO READ IT

The first requisite in the reading of the Bible is the possession of your own individual copy, an authentic edition having good type. We are inclined to have too much sentiment about our Bibles. Because a Bible has belonged to our grandfather or grandmother, we attempt to use it, although the print may be poor, and impossible to read with comfort, even in a good light. It is safe to say that any book whose type is tiring to the eyes will not often be read. Remember also that the Bible is one of our greatest treasures. If you are willing to pay large sums for clothes and other bodily needs, it is only consistent that you should be equally ready to spend liberally for the best possible editions of the Bible. Having secured a good copy, do not lay it aside and forget it. The Bible is the one book that should never become dusty. A dusty Bible is an indictment of the owner. So keep it in a conspicuous place, in your bedroom or reading-nook. It would be embarrassing to many people if asked,

"Where is your Bible at this moment? When did you last read it? How often do you read it?"

Do not regard the Bible as a fetish, for it is not magical. It is but a printed record and is without value unless used. To use it means to read it and ponder over its contents.

How should one read it? It will be found a great satisfaction to read it through, as many do, from Genesis to Revelation. To do this will be somewhat of a task but it will have its rewards. There are some repetitions. There are genealogies containing names that one can hardly pronounce. I would not say that one should read all of these. And one would be justified in skimming those parts of Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy that deal with the minutiæ of the building of the Ark of the Covenant and the provision of materials for the Tabernacle, and the various ritual requirements in the offering of sacrifices.

But there are those who will say, "I just can't read all the rest. There is so much I don't understand. What is the minimum amount necessary to grasp the general meaning?" The minimum is the narrative. One must know at least the Bible story, which can be had without reading the total of sixty-six books, but only twelve complete books and two chapters of one other book. These carry the narrative and form the framework of all the rest.

Therefore, among the books of the Old Testament, read Genesis, Exodus, chapters 33 and 34 of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, the two Books of Samuel, the two Books of Kings, Ezra and Nehemiah. Of those in the New Testament, read St. Matthew (or St. Luke, if you prefer) and the Acts. Surely that is no great task, and any person seeking spiritual culture and desiring information regarding religious history, should be glad to do that much.

Few, however, will wish to stop there, for by that time there will have been awakened an interest and the desire to go further and complete the picture, of which the narrative is but the outline. In that case, one would begin to read selectively, sometimes for culture, sometimes for sheer pleasure. The cultural urge will impel one to seek an understanding of how the crude conceptions of God, shown in the early books of the Old Testament, came to be uplifted and expanded into the later view of Judaism. To learn of this trend, he would read the Prophets, particularly Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel and Micah. And should he wish the chronological setting of these men and the political crises with which they were confronted, he would read again carefully the two Books of Kings.

Closely allied to the teaching of the Prophets in their marvelous work of reforming the older views of God, and pushing on to newer and wider

conceptions, is the Book of Psalms,—a book which is erroneously attributed to David alone, as in the calendar of The Book of Common Prayer, the title of which reads, "The Psalter or the Psalms of David." As a matter of fact, the Book of Psalms is a compilation from various authors, from Moses onward until after the captivity. To indicate the larger content of the Psalms, a better title would be, "The Cry of the Human Heart to God." The importance of the Psalms, apart from their liturgical value and their personal devotional expression, is due to the fact that they follow the path and reflect the religious views of Israel from the crudest Yahwehism to the very threshold of the Christian church.

Let us take two examples: Psalm 109 is primitive and evinces the vindictive spirit of that unregenerate age when Yahweh was the tribal God and when it was written that one should love one's neighbor and hate one's enemy. Therefore the author, smarting under injury, cries to God against the offender:

Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.

When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin.

Let his days be few; and let another take his office.

Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.
Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.
Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour.
Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.
Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out.[1]

That such imprecations cause us to shudder with horror, shows how far, thanks to the Prophets and others who followed them, we have advanced. And like "the dew of Hermon" are the words of Jesus, when he says: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." [2]

The opposite extreme of the crude and erroneous philosophy expressed in Psalm 109 is perhaps best illustrated in Psalm 23:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

[1] Psalm 109: 6-13.
[2] Matt. 5: 44, 45.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

It should be noted that even this Psalm falls far short of the full Christian expression. For it is intensely individualistic. "The Lord is *my* shepherd; *I* shall not want." There is a vast difference between this thought and the full expression of Christian fellowship as outlined by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. The foregoing must suffice for illustration of interpretation and development.

But in following the selective process of reading the Bible one should not overlook the romance that flows through some of the books. In that category, literature contains nothing finer than the Song of Solomon and the Book of Ruth. In the latter, Ruth's expression of devotion to Naomi, her mother-in-law, is the chief gem:

Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.[1]

Such books and many others should be read at a sitting, for it is often fatal to the full impression to break them up into the arbitrary divisions of chapters. Then, should one desire colorful tales of patriotism, the homogeneous books of Esther and Daniel would be read. Or should he seek practical philosophy and wise sayings, he would turn to the Book of Proverbs and there find much of its contents as apt for guidance today as it was three thousand years ago.

But it is not always necessary or possible to read extended portions of the Bible. There are striking bits, or what Professor Moulton terms "Biblical Masterpieces," worthy of attention, such as David's lament over Saul and Jonathan, which follows:

The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen!

[1] Ruth 1: 16-17.

Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.

Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain, upon you, nor fields of offerings: for there the shield of the mighty is vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil.

From the blood of the slain, from the fat of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan turned not back, and the sword of Saul returned not empty.

Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul, who clothed you in scarlet, with other delights; who put on ornaments of gold upon your apparel.

How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thine high places.

I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished! [1]

[1] II Sam. 1: 19-27.

Then there is the perennial problem of pain. There is nothing comparable on that subject to the Book of Job, which Carlyle terms, "A noble book; a man's book," and is "regarded by universal consent as the literary masterpiece of the Old Testament, and indeed as one of the masterpieces of world literature." [1]

The Bible is largely biography, and in every book of biography one expects to find letters. But letters can only be understood when read in the light of the environment and circumstances of the correspondents. The Epistles of Saint Paul and others are simply letters to friends. These, while containing much practical counsel obvious to the casual reader, carry references that cannot be understood without a knowledge of the Acts of the Apostles, the Gospels and portions of the Old Testament giving the historical setting and doctrinal sources to which reference is made and the knowledge of which is implied. For instance, to understand certain passages in the Epistle to the Philippians, one must read in Acts, Chapter 16, the interesting story of how Saint Paul first came to visit Philippi, and his experiences there.

The next question to be asked is: "What version of the Bible should I use?" The answer is deter-

[1] Morris Jastrow, Jr., *The Book of Job*, p. 7.

mined by the purpose of one's reading. If one cares chiefly for rhythm and euphony, then the King James Version (of 1611) would be recommended, as it is our best example of Elizabethan English. But if accuracy of translation and the clearer meaning are sought, then the Revised Version (of 1885) must be advised, since, for three reasons, it excels the King James text in these respects.

First, it is based upon better manuscripts. The King James translators had only the Latin Vulgate of Saint Jerome and some lesser versions upon which to base their work. But later, three great Greek manuscripts of the utmost value were discovered. They are the Vatican Manuscript, now in the Vatican Library at Rome; the Sinaitic Manuscript, now in the Leningrad Library; and the Alexandrian Manuscript, which is in the British Museum. The discovery of these rich sources, so attractively described by Dr. J. Paterson-Smyth in "How We Got Our Bible," formed a rich store of materials which the King James translators never dreamed were in existence. In the second place, the Revised Version is superior for accuracy because the scholarship of its day was superior to that of the 17th century, when the King James Version was made. And thirdly, since 1611, the meaning of some 200 English words has changed to a degree that makes some

passages in the King James Version obscure, and even misleading. In the Revised Version, these difficulties have been removed by the use of our present day vocabulary.

A few examples will illustrate this point. In the King James Version, Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, is quoted as saying: "Take no thought for the morrow,"—a counsel hard for one to accept. But the Revised Version reads, "Be not anxious for the morrow;" that is, do not worry. Then, there are the words, "damn" and "damned." "He that believeth not shall be damned," is found in the King James Version, conveying to us the idea of a hard and hopeless condemnation. The Revised translation is, "He that believeth not shall be judged." Again, St. Paul in the King James Version, is made to say, "Our conversation is in heaven," which would seem to mean that our converse is there. The Revised Version translates this sentence, "Our citizenship is in heaven," suggesting that in this life we are pilgrims and that our true homeland is beyond.

Then, because of deficiency in scholarship and the lack of the three great manuscripts referred to, for translation and comparison, the King James translators made a number of errors, which are corrected in the Revised Version. For example, in Job, we find in the King James version:

For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:
And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:
Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; . . .[1]

In the Revised Version, this quotation is worded:

But as for me I know that my redeemer liveth,
And at last he will stand up upon the earth:
And after my skin, even this body, is destroyed,
Then without my flesh shall I see God;
Whom I, even I, shall see, on my side,
And mine eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger.

Many other instances might be quoted.

Therefore, it is well to own at least two Bibles, the King James and the Revised Versions. Beyond these translations of the text, certain handbooks will be found valuable and illuminating, as they give particular information on the history of the manuscripts, the geography and the political environment of the kingdoms and peoples, their religious likenesses and differences, and verbal photographs of the great personages, as well as explanations of the origin and development of religious parties and of

[1] Job 19: 25-27.

doctrinal definitions. The following books are recommended because they have been found helpful by a large number of students:

"How We Got Our Bible," J. Paterson-Smyth.
"Human Nature in the Bible," Wm. Lyon Phelps.
"How to Know the Bible," George Hodges.
"A Pilgrimage to Palestine," Harry Emerson Fosdick.
"The Beacon Lights of Prophecy," Albert C. Knudson.
"Unravelling the Book of Books," Ernest R. Trattner.[1]

These by no means exhaust the list. There are many others to be found in our bookstores.

From the foregoing it is apparent that the Bible may be likened to the earth which holds its treasure of gold. It is well known to those who have visited the gold-bearing regions that there are three methods of securing the precious metal. The first is the easiest process. It is called placer mining and consists in sifting and washing out, by the most primitive methods, the soil and gravel from the particles and nuggets that are found on or near the surface. But digging deeper, the miner comes to quartz gold,

[1] See pp. 99-101 for fuller information regarding these and other books.

carried in the flinty rock, which must be crushed before the gold can be recovered. After these two methods had been used for untold centuries, it was learned that there was yet an abundance of the precious substance which had not even been recognized, as these particles do not glisten in their naked beauty, but are concealed in sulphates, and cannot be brought out except by a complicated process called cyaniding. The point is that all three processes are necessary to obtain the gold. The simplest method is easily practised. No particular skill is necessary. The second requires more toil and energy. The third demands scientific knowledge and application. And so it is with the Bible: anyone can read the stories; others can go a step further and appreciate the variety of materials; still others, by close application, can find in the same materials far reaching suggestions and deeper values.

The Bible must be read with an earnest spiritual purpose, for the mere knowledge of the text is of small value and is sometimes harmful. One often hears of scoffers and atheists as possessing wonderful facility in quoting the Scriptures, but they do so only to discredit them. In China, some of the anti-Christian leaders come from Christian Schools. As St. Peter says, they wrest the Scriptures unto their own destruction.[1] We should often read the Bible

[1] II Peter 3: 16.

upon our knees, with reverence and strong desire, seeking light and guidance. Some of the best sermons are made in this way. We may well believe that the Psalmist so read it when he could exclaim, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." [1] And also, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" [2] Jesus undoubtedly read the Scriptures with this spiritual insight, and could therefore speak with understanding and authority. If Bunyan, Luther, Wesley, Moody and Brooks had not delved into this source of values they would never have been known to history and the world would have been infinitely poorer. Happy is the man who can say, "Lord, what love have I unto thy law, all the day long is my study in it." [3]

History has many outstanding instances of the fact that the study of the Bible has produced great personages. John Bunyan was a humble tinker who had enjoyed few advantages of education, but with the Bible as his chief textbook, was able to produce "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Grace Abounding." In our own country, Dwight L. Moody, the great evangelist, as a young man left his position in

[1] Psalm 119: 105.
[2] Psalm 27: 1.
[3] Psalm 119: 97. (P. B.)

a store and began to teach a Bible Class, when he was hardly able to pronounce the words of the lesson. His only study was the Bible and books relating to the delivery of its message. By means of these he became a speaker of compelling power and brought about the conversion of quite a million people, whose conversion, a biographer declares, was usually real and genuine. Among his converts was the great Apostle of Labrador, Dr. Grenfell.

If we go further back we find more astounding evidences of its powers, for John the Baptist, the rustic prophet of the wilderness, to whom multitudes flocked "From Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about," had no other book but the Bible. And Jesus, who spoke "with authority and not as the scribes," and gave the world a new birth also had only this text book.

How short-sighted we are if we neglect so great a treasure house of knowledge and inspiration! Professor William Lyon Phelps of Yale stood on firm ground when he said: "I thoroughly believe in a university education for both men and women; but I believe a knowledge of the Bible without a college course is more valuable than a college course without the Bible."

THE CHURCH—HOW IT CAME TO BE

CHAPTER III

THE CHURCH—HOW IT CAME TO BE

In the midst of the perplexing ecclesiastical conditions in which we live, manifested by our "unhappy divisions," and perpetuated by our sectarian prejudices and shibboleths, it would be well if every one could have as a part of his mental equipment, at least a brief outline of the origin and development of the Church, with the reasons for its present divided condition; and could also understand the desire for Christian unity expressed in our Prayer Book and in the recent conference on Faith and Order at Lausanne. Our colleges and theological seminaries devote several terms to cover this wide field, and it would seem futile in this limited space to attempt more than a chart of the subject. So the purpose is to touch, in sequence, a few of the salient points, with a view to refreshing the minds of those who are conversant with the subject and informing those who are not. Should this be accomplished, each one would be able to evaluate for himself the present situation in organized Christianity, and be

ready to speak the word in season or to perform the deed that would help towards the goal of reconciliation of differences, that the Christian Church may eventually have a unified program with which to win the world and lead to the ultimate realization of our Lord's prayer that all might be one as he was one with the Father.[1]

In the beginning man had no conception of such an institution as a Church because he had no conception of God. The stories in the early chapters of Genesis are folklore. They represent an intercourse between God and man which could not possibly have existed in the early ages of human life on this planet. For at the first and for a long time, man was ignorant and bestial. It was only after untold centuries that he developed sufficient intelligence to make reasoning possible. With that modicum of intelligence came a sense of need, and to meet this demand, there developed a belief in a source of help, later to be called "God."

Even then no idea of anything resembling a Church had dawned. God was believed in, though the conception was dim and imperfect, and from that belief emerged a sense of man's relation to him, which was also imperfect. Man's conception probably was that God was a being who controlled nat-

[1] John 17: 21.

ural phenomena,—the storm, the flood, famine and pestilence, the fecundity of the soil, the sunshine and the rain. In short, bane and blessing, favor and punishment, were ascribed to him. Therefore his favor must be secured, he must be placated and pleased, implored and cajoled. Thus primitive worship began. There was as yet no thought of organization, priesthood, rites or ordinances, and certainly no idea of propaganda of any kind. All ritual acts, the sacrifices on the rude altars of field and forest, were a later development, and even then no organization was implied. Man was the priest of his own household.

At that time, the family was the unit, and not until later did the tribe emerge. With the emergence of the tribe, came the conception of tribal gods, such as Baal and Ashtoroth, gods of the Phoenicians; Moloch of the Ammonites; and Yahweh of the Israelites. But even when the Israelites had reached the stage where Yahweh was accepted as their god, they had no idea of a church. Like the other peoples of that day, their religious conceptions and customs were of a very crude character. Religious convictions were independently expressed according to one's need and purpose.

So when Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt and came to Mount Sinai, their religion was

nebulous. It consisted of Mesopotamian, Canaanitish, Egyptian and Bedouin elements, without cohesion or order. But at Mount Sinai—which was a kind of Plattsburg Training Camp—Moses, who had learned the art of government and administration in Pharaoh's court, and had developed a naturally mystical temperament by long sojourning in the desert of Sinai, began to mold the tribes or families of Israel into a religious and political unity. Thus, after communing with God on the mountain, the first steps were taken. The Commandments were given, rites and ceremonies were imposed, and here began a corporate organization and expression, which we may call the beginnings of a church. It should be noted that such a significant development was not without its adequate cause and that it was in response to a practical need. For if Israel was not to be simply another wandering tribe of the desert, organization must be effective and some definite goal set. Therefore Moses took the vast horde of fugitive slaves and began to mold them into a conscious unity and to set them forward towards their great destiny of revealing God to the world. To that end religious idealism and discipline were prime necessities. In short, with the belief in God, there must be time, place and method for approaching him, learning his will and receiving inspira-

tion. Thus the "church in the wilderness," referred to by Saint Stephen in his apology before the authorities at Jerusalem [1] was for us the first church, though crude and imperfect; and the Books of Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus and Deuteronomy tell the story of its organization, discipline and worship.

The first place of meeting was around the Tabernacle or portable tent, under which was placed the chest called the Ark of the Covenant. Later on in the Ark were kept the sacred symbols and relics, such as the stone tablets on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod and the pot of manna. Throughout the wilderness wanderings, this Tabernacle was from time to time set up and the people gathered around it for worship and instruction. And there we have the germ of our Church services of to-day.[2]

But after this definite beginning, there was no continuous development. During the period of the Judges and later, even this form of ecclesiastical organization was lost, and Israel very nearly reverted to its primitive condition of unorganized religious practices.

[1] Acts 7: 38.

[2] Caution should be observed in accepting many of the details regarding ideas and practices of the earlier biblical times. It is generally recognized by scholars that editors have not infrequently written into the older documents that which could only have come by a much later development.

With Samuel the Kingmaker (1165 B. C.), a religious reform began with his School of the Prophets and other activities, and the people were from time to time gathered together to offer sacrifices at certain sacred places, particularly at Shechem, Shiloh and Hebron. The Ark of the Covenant which had been preserved throughout the long period of decadence and disorganization was again the centre, and the token of God's presence.

Later, in the reign of Solomon (about 1000 B. C.) the first temple was built and better organized services were instituted. This continued until 586 B. C., when Nebuchadnezzar, King of Assyria, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, and took the people away as captives to Babylon. Thus again, there was no church. It should be understood that during the whole period of captivity, no corporate worship or sacrifices of any character could be observed, for in the eyes of the Jews a pagan land was a polluted land and it would be sacrilege to offer the sacred worship there. Psalm 137, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" gives a hint of that conviction. Therefore, throughout the period of captivity (B. C. 586-532), the rite of circumcision, prayer and lamentation constituted almost the only religious expression possible. But in

the reign of Cyrus (538-529 B. C.), the captives in Babylon were allowed to return to Jerusalem, and, under the leadership of Ezra, Nehemiah and Zerubbabel, rebuilt their great church, the Temple, and re-established their worship and other religious customs.

At this point, we have the beginning of an institution which meant much to the preservation and development of the Jewish church and also was a seed plot for the planting of Christianity. I refer to the Synagogue. The Synagogue arose from the need of a convenient place where groups could meet for various religious and social needs. It was, in fact, an extension of the Temple. People living in the provinces and those dispersed over foreign countries, were unable, except on rare occasions, to visit Jerusalem. Therefore synagogues were established throughout the world wherever Jews migrated, and also in the homeland. They filled a threefold purpose: as day schools for the children, as racial courts where matters relating to the Jewish group were discussed and adjudicated, and as houses of worship on the Sabbath Day.

After a while, in Palestine, synagogues became almost incredibly numerous. One author has made the statement that in Jerusalem in the first century of our era, there were 394 synagogues; another

claims that the number was 480. Perhaps such figures represent the orientalism of using specific numbers merely to indicate multiplicity. Therefore it would perhaps be safer to say that in Jerusalem there were a great many synagogues in relation to the population—possibly equal to the number of public schools in a city like New York. But of course it was in the provinces and in foreign countries that the Synagogue was so necessary to the life of the Jewish community. As Christians, we are chiefly interested in that institution because of the large part it played in the founding of Christianity.

In the New Testament, the synagogue is mentioned no less than seventy times, and the Gospels and Acts show that in almost every locality, the Christian message was first delivered before a gathering in that institution. Jesus was more the child of the Synagogue than of the Temple, because at Nazareth the synagogue was his school for seven days in the week, while he was seldom able, on account of the distance, to visit the Temple. He began his teaching in the synagogues of Nazareth and Capernaum.[1] Paul followed the same practice, and wherever he went throughout Asia Minor and Europe, he first sought the Synagogue in which to begin his work.[2] This was logical as he knew he

[1] Matt. 4: 23. Luke 4: 16.
[2] Acts, chapters 13 and 14; also 18: 8.

would always find there a group of people who worshipped God and who had been prepared by the teaching of the older scriptures to expect the Messiah, to understand the language of religion and to weigh the new message.

In short, it is difficult to conceive, under the many adverse conditions that existed, how, with the prejudices and the persecutions of the time, the Christian Church could have gotten a start without the seed plot offered by the Synagogue. Today it is the only organized survival of the national church of the Hebrew people.

The same period that saw the rise and spread of the Synagogue was also notable for the development of outstanding Jewish ideas and the emergence of religious parties in the Jewish Church. It is not possible to grasp ecclesiastical conditions as Jesus found them, without realizing this fact. For instance, when Ezra and Nehemiah returned with the captives from Babylon and re-established them in Palestine, there were, so far as we know, no party divisions, and the stock of religious ideas was comparatively small. But by the time of Christ, there had risen the notable sects of the Sadducees, the Pharisees, and the Herodians, not to mention lesser groups. During the same period there developed the conceptions of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth,

of a Messiah, of the Fatherhood of God and the belief in personal immortality. So it can truly be said that the last five centuries of the old era were, in religious development, among the most fruitful in history.

To recapitulate before taking the next step, we have seen that at the beginning man was ignorant and bestial, and only gradually came to a conception of the existence of gods, who, to his mind, controlled natural phenomena, hazardous or favorable to his life. Then followed the desire to win favor from these unseen and terrible powers, which led to the offering of sacrifices of various kinds. Much later, in the time of Moses, came the laws of corporate relationship, such as the Decalogue and the rules for worship and instruction, which obtained in the Jewish Church with its Temple and synagogues.

From the Jewish Church sprang the Christian Church. It is a debatable question whether Jesus intended to found a new institution or whether he expected a natural development of the total body of believers into a world-wide fellowship, somewhat as Yahwehism had passed into Judaism.

It is not possible or necessary to attempt in these pages a history of the Christian Church. The aim is to point out a few factors that have contributed to make the Church what we find it today. The first of these is the Greek influence. In the time of

Christ, and the decade following him, the Christian Church was purely Jewish in its membership. In fact, it appears that for some time none of the Apostles had any idea that Gentiles would ever be admitted except as they became obedient to the Jewish ordinances. That is to say, the road would be from Paganism to Judaism, and then to the fold of Christ's flock, the organization of which would be but a slight modification of the Jewish Church. The first break in this conception occurred when Saint Peter baptized the Roman centurion, Cornelius, and his family.[1] But that was considered entirely exceptional. Later on Saint Paul, who became the great Apostle to the Gentiles, had a difficult time convincing the Church that with Christ there were no racial distinctions. He needed all of the prestige and power of Saint Peter and Saint James to gain tolerance for his Gentile converts.[2] But very soon the lesser became the greater, the stream of Jewish converts began to dry up while the Gentile flow grew rapidly in volume, and the Greek influence became dominant. We shall see in our next chapter that it was this Hellenic spirit, so largely philosophical and metaphysical, which was brought in by those Gentile converts, that led to the extensive creedal development of the first four centuries, and caused

[1] Acts, chapter 10; also 11: 1-18.
[2] Acts 15.

many of the ills which today afflict and divide the Church.

The next factor was the great schism that first occurred in 846 A. D., rending the Church in twain and separating the East from the West, the Greek from the Latin elements. This schism became permanent in 1439. It was Rome versus Constantinople, and later Western Europe versus Asia Minor and Africa. This single division of the Christian forces continued until the 16th century, which brought the Protestant Reformation, with Luther, Calvin and Zwingli in the lead, resulting in the complete and final break between the Protestant Reformers and the Roman Catholic organization. The original Christian Church was then like Gaul, divided into three parts, the Roman, the Greek and the Protestant Churches.

At this point it should be understood that there were two types of reformation in the 16th century, one was from without and the other from within. When the Continental Churches broke away from the Roman Church, they lost the perpetuating order of the ministry; namely the bishops with their peculiar functions, such as confirmation and ordination. But in England, when the Church threw off the yoke of Rome, the bishops were retained with all their functions, and the line with the Apostles was

thus preserved. It remained the same Church minus the dominance of Rome.

It ought not to be necessary, but as a matter of fact it is, to say a word about the charge which from time to time comes from our Roman brethren, that Henry the Eighth was the founder of the English Church. We hold no brief for Henry. He was of vile earth and a miserable sinner, and was anything but an ornament to the Church. What he did was perhaps prompted by selfish motives. But he did free the Church of England from Rome. In refutation of the claim that Henry founded the Church of England, it is sufficient to refer to the four elements of a church—the Scriptures, the ministry, the sacraments and the creeds—and to ask these questions: "Did Henry write any Scriptures?" "Did he make or alter any creed?" "Did he institute any sacrament?" "Did he institute or modify the ministry?" It is obvious that Henry left the Church as he found it, except that he set it free from Roman authority.

From the Reformation movement on the Continent and in England sprang the Lutheran, the Swiss and the Calvinistic Churches, and some of the other denominations that exist today. They, with the historic churches, present what might be called an ecclesiastical Joseph's coat of many colors. What the Church of the future will be, no prophet pro-

claims, but if the world is to be won to Christ, there must first be brought about some sort of concordat which will unite the forces of the various organizations in the common task. For as God is one and his people are one, there can be, in the last analysis, but one plan, though there will always be variety in organization and in the modes of worship. Therefore while we pray and strive for unity we do so with certain qualifications in mind, fully aware that true unity does not demand a rigid uniformity. The following has been suggested as a useful formula, and probably there is no better: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, diversity; in all things, charity."

To any one with the full perspective of history, the present period is the most promising politically, socially and spiritually, of any the world has known. It can be said with truth:

> "The morning light is breaking;
> The darkness disappears;
> The sons of earth are waking . . ."

For all signs point to a clearing of the ground for the building of a new order, with the true Church Universal to leaven the whole lump.

The late World War, the present disruption in Russia, the chaos in China, the unrest in India, the great industrial conflicts, are but the breaking down

of walls of prejudice, selfishness, ignorance, misunderstanding, suspicion and fear. And when these are all leveled, we shall begin to build anew on better foundations and broader lines, the Church of the Living God. In society we shall then have in fuller measure the rule of God on earth, a thing impossible of accomplishment without the social and national cataclysms which we have witnessed and are still witnessing. The barriers must be burned away, the fortresses of fear razed to the ground, and men must be brought to see the futility of human devices and thus be driven to God, "their fortress and their might."

A few years ago, we were hardening into a narrow, fearful nationalism, each nation trying to live to itself, each afraid of the other and arming to the teeth for the battle, which was inevitable. The Great War came and forced national groups to co-operate and consolidate, and to realize that no nation, however great, could stand by itself. And then there dawned the idea of larger groupings. Thus finally some form of internationalism came to be recognized as the only practical state of political and social survival.

There was Russia, a vast country containing about one-sixth of the world's population, shackled, held down and throttled by a stupid and cruel autocracy,

an autocracy unrebuked by a servile, complacent national Church. Both Church and State have been crushed, and perhaps we should say, "Thank God!" Sovietism, with its atheism (perhaps a scourge of God), is but a passing phase. It will have its day and cease to be; but it will leave the ground clear for a better political and spiritual structure.

China was equally bound down by a corrupt government and a religion which led "no whither." Its new religion, Christianity, came to them handicapped with all of the prejudices and quarrels of sectarian Europe and America. China today is in turmoil. Cities have been burned, churches looted, missionary establishments confiscated and their work brought to a standstill. But that which we count loss, may be gain, for the ground is being cleared and the old structure is being wrecked that the new building may rise. Far-seeing men feel that conditions being as they were and as they promised to remain, nothing could have come to China or Russia more beneficial, socially and politically, than the wrecking of the old and outward, that the new and better might be built. As to Russia, the autocracy would have continued to be more arrogant and indifferent, since the Church manifested no regenerating power. In China, we should have vainly persisted trying to make Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Methodists,

Presbyterians, Baptists and Lutherans of a people who were waiting to be won by a more direct road to Christ, but could not see him for the artificial barriers which our sectarianism had erected. As it is, the seed will not be lost, the labor of faithful missionaries will not have been in vain. China will go on, and once the ground is clear, will build its own Church, freed from sectarian prejudices of the past, and will open a shorter path to God. What if political and ecclesiastical structures fall:

> "Crowns and thrones may perish,
> Kingdoms rise and wane,
> But the Church of Jesus
> Constant will remain."

To refer again to India. What a mighty leaven is working there! India, caste-ridden, sect-ridden, seething with unrest, is reaching out for light and is beginning to find it. Read "The Christ of the Indian Road," [1] and see how the light from the face of Jesus is beginning to shine into the hearts of the millions of that great land.

So in Russia, China and India, where more than half of the human race lives, we witness social and political convulsions such as have never before existed. In one sense, these upheavals are but the death

[1] By E. Stanley Jones.

throes of the old order; in another, the birth pangs of the new. Surveying the world from the beginning until today, one is convinced that:

"God is working his purpose out,
As year succeeds to year:
God is working his purpose out,
And the time is drawing near;
Nearer and nearer draws the time,
The time that shall surely be,
When the earth shall be filled with
the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea."

The Church began by men seeking God, who gave them both the faculty and the impulse for the quest. The Church will be perfected by the measure in which men bring themselves into harmony with the will of God; that will is plainly shown in Jesus, our brother, the perfect Son of God.

THE CREEDS—HOW THEY DEVELOPED

CHAPTER IV

THE CREEDS—HOW THEY DEVELOPED

A creed is a declaration of conviction derived from the experiences of life and from the revelation that has come to man of the spiritual realities which transcend the material phenomena round about him. A creed implies contemplation, meditation and ratiocination, and is a conclusion reached from logical premises. It can thus be differentiated from a superstition, which is a blind acceptance of a view that has no foundation in fact or logic. Consequently, no primitive people ever had a creed. The best that can be said for them in this respect is that in their superstitions, which carried a belief in beings of a spiritual quality with superhuman powers, we have the germ of faith in God.

Tracing our religion historically, we find that the Jewish people were almost barren of doctrinal statements, their beliefs being implied rather than formulated. With them, faith meant trust in God, whose existence was conceded; whereas in the Christian creeds, God is analysed and philosophized until

imagination stalls and belief becomes mere assent to incomprehensible affirmations.

The first creed, which the Jews called The Shema, consisted of three words: God is one. It was phrased: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord." The brevity of the statement was due to the fact that with these early believers, religion was a matter of conduct rather than of belief. They were not philosophers, and there was almost an entire absence of metaphysical speculation among them. Not only was this creed of three words sufficient for the people at large but also for such far-seeing progressive souls as the Prophets, John the Baptist, and Jesus. Being simple and fundamental, it was possible for men of various parties, and wide differences of opinion, to unite as the family of God. Therefore, we read in the New Testament that in the time of Jesus there was the party of the Sadducees, controlling the Temple and the ecclesiastical organization, who believed in neither immortality, angel nor spirit; the Pharisees who believed in all of these; and other religious groups. They all worshipped together in the Temple and the Synagogue without any discrimination because of dogmatic differences. In fact, the Jewish Church at the time of Christ is about the best illustration we have of religious unity, and it is notable that Jesus, while stern and sometimes scathing in his rebuke of men for defect in conduct,

is not reported as ever having found fault with them for differences in belief. Those who advocate discipline based on dogma, might well consider the tolerance of Jesus, and also the fact that a creed of three words which simply implied the existence of God and declared his unity, was all that was needed.

Since the time of Jesus, we have multiplied creedal statements until they are to many "a heavy burden, grievous to be borne," and to others they are meaningless or intellectually offensive. In the face of the present situation, we should do well to ask: "What would Jesus have to say about this vast dogmatic structure that we have erected?"

Let us now trace the development of the creeds that were composed and enacted after Jesus left the earth. The first was The Shema: God is one,[1] with the baptismal formula used by the Apostles: "They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." [2] Subsequently, however, there was a further amplification by which reference to the Trinity was incorporated.[3] It is thus safe to say that during the life of the Apostles, the old Jewish creed of three words had been expanded to one of about ten words. But such a brief statement of faith did not satisfy the later ecclesiastics, for amplifications were made

[1] Deut. 6:4.
[2] Acts 8:16, 37.
[3] Matt. 28:19.

and resulted in what is known as The Old Roman Creed which follows:

"I believe in God the Father Almighty; and in Christ Jesus, His only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and buried, the third day rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitteth on the right hand of the Father, from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead; And in the Holy Ghost, the holy Church, the remission of sins, the resurrection of the flesh."

Thus were added to the original simple declaration of faith in the divinity of God and the Messiahship of Jesus, biological, political, philosophical, astronomical and levitational ideas to be imposed as articles of belief necessary to membership in the Church and to personal salvation.

Later even this amplified creed was thought insufficient; other definitions and deductions must be made; so in 325 A. D. a General Council at Nicea composed of 250 bishops was held. The bishops are specified because the other clergy and the laity had no vote. The purpose of the Council was to decide a controversy which had arisen as to the nature of Christ. Arius, a prominent presbyter of Alexandria and the leader of one party, declared that Christ was *homoiousion,* that is, of *like* nature with God.

Athanasius, the leader of the other party, held that Christ was *homoousion* or of the *same* nature as God. The final result of the contest was a decision in favor of the Athanasian party, and the insertion into the creed of the statement that Christ was "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God . . . of one substance with the Father." The effect of the adoption of these statements was to split the Church between the Arians on the one hand, and the Orthodox on the other. The former were declared heretics and excommunicated. It should be noted that creedal statements had by then grown from three to two hundred and twenty-four words. Still more significant is the fact that here began the demand for uniformity of creedal statement as a test of orthodoxy.[1] The exact text of the creed follows:

"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible.

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father; By whom all things were made, both those in heaven and those on earth; who

[1] During the third and fourth centuries, there were different creeds used in certain local or provincial churches, such as the creeds of Jerusalem and Caesarea. This fact shows conclusively that at that time declarations of faith were not required to be uniform.

for us men and for our salvation came down and was incarnate and was made man; suffered, and rose again the third day; ascended into heaven; is coming to judge the quick and the dead.

"And in the Holy Ghost.

"But those who say 'Once He was not,' and 'Before He was begotten He was not,' and 'He came into existence out of what was not,' or 'That the Son of God was of a different substance or essence,' or 'That He was made,' or 'is changeable or mutable,' these the Catholic Church anathematises."

The reader will have noticed that our present Creed, which we call The Nicene Creed, is not, in fact, the Creed of Nicea. Our form is due to a combination, made about 360 A. D., of the chief parts of the Nicene Creed and the old Baptismal Creed, with certain supplementary phrases regarding the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Birth. After that, another addition was made to the Nicene form. It came about in this way: In 589 A. D., at the Third Council of Toledo, there was inserted the so-called Filioque Clause, "and the Son,"—making the Holy Ghost proceed not only from the Father but also from the Son. This insertion was without authority, for the Council of Toledo was not representative of the whole Church, and therefore it had no right to make any such change. But subsequently the clause was gradually adopted by the Church in Europe. It was

promptly rejected by the Eastern (Greek Catholic) Church and has ever since been the cause of schism between Eastern and Western Christendom. Thus we see that creedal definitions, beyond what were required in Apostolic times, caused a split in the Church of the fourth century and again when the Filioque Clause was added.

At this point I cannot forebear quoting a writer in the Atlantic Monthly, a statement which bears upon our subject:

"Theology is called the elaboration of Christ's teaching. But Christ's teaching was vital, dynamic. It outlined in simple phrases and examples a beautiful philosophy of life. Theology, on the other hand, is a speculative science which belongs to the academic sphere. It is the rationalistic development of Christian doctrine. It is built upon the framework of pagan philosophy. It has served rather to confuse than to clarify the human mind on the problems of divine truth. It has precipitated the world into a confusion of Christian religions. It has been the occasion, for long centuries, of enmities and bitterness. It prepared the materials for that barbarous institution known as the Inquisition, through which thousands of innocent victims were cast into dungeons, torn limb from limb, or burned at the stake. It set the stage for the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It has made

the civilized world a battle ground of religious hatred and bigotry.

Why speculate upon the divine attributes according to the syllogistic method of Aristotle when we have God's own image and His glorious handiwork before us? The great open book of nature portrays God's love and bounty in such terms that all may read and understand. In its beauteous pages there are no obscure passages. There is no heresy possible in that great religious revelation. Modern man, in his new found intellectual freedom, is just beginning to discover the treasures with which God has filled the universe." [1]

But we have not yet told the whole story of how the creeds came to be. The Apostles' Creed was no more the Creed of the Apostles than was our present Nicene Creed the Creed of Nicea. Our so-called Apostles' Creed reached its present form in Gaul (France) early in the eighth century, although its substance is that of the old Roman and other earlier creeds.

Another formula, which, to those who deplore the amplification of dogmatic requirements is the most offensive, must be mentioned. I refer to the Athanasian Creed, which was once supposed to have come from Athanasius, the great opponent of Arius. However, this creed is not earlier than the fifth century.

[1] *Atlantic Monthly* of May, 1928, p. 669.

Fortunately for us it does not appear in the American Prayer Book. But it is still found in the Prayer Book of the Church of England, and is required to be said on the great festivals. Since it is historically interesting, and since it illustrates to what lengths of intolerance the dogmatic spirit will go, the text is here given:

"Whosoever will be saved: before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholick Faith.

"Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled: without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

"And the Catholick Faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;

"Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance.

"For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost.

"But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.

"Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost.

"The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate: and the Holy Ghost uncreate.

"The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible: and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

"The Father eternal, the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal.

"And yet they are not three eternals: but one eternal.

"As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated: but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.

"So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghost Almighty.

"And yet they are not three Almighties: but one Almighty.

"So the Father is God, the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God.

"And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.

"So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord: and the Holy Ghost Lord.

"And yet not three Lords; but one Lord.

"For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity: to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord;

"So are we forbidden by the Catholick Religion: to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords.

"The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten.

"The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created, but begotten.

"The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

"So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons: one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.

"And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other: none is greater, or less than another;

"But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together: and co-equal.

"So that in all things as is aforesaid: the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.

"He therefore that will be saved: must thus think of the Trinity.

"Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation: that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;

"God, of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world;

"Perfect God, and perfect Man: of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting;

"Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood.

"Who although he be God and Man: Yet he is not two, but one Christ;

"One; not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into God;

"One altogether; not by confusion of the Substance: but by Unity of Person.

"For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man: so God and Man is one Christ:

"Who suffered for our salvation: descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead.

"He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty: from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

"At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies: and shall give account for their own works.

"And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting: and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.

"This is the Catholick Faith: which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.

"Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost;

"As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. AMEN."

It is a far cry from the simple dignity of the creed of Jesus, consisting of three words, to the metic-

ulosity of this Creed of seven hundred words. No one familiar with the Gospels could possibly imagine Jesus as speaking in any such terms, or manifesting such an intolerant spirit.

To all of these human attempts to analyze God and to define the proper mental attitude for believers must be added the Protestant Confessions of Faith; such as, the Augsburg and the Westminster Confessions and the Thirty-Nine Articles, comprising thousands of words imposed upon disciples to ensure their orthodoxy. It may well be asked again: what would Jesus say—what does he say—to all of this word-mouthing, so foreign to his requirements? Surely we may find the answer to this question in his own words: "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."[1]

The Church of the early centuries, and of the 16th century, heeding neither the prophets nor Jesus, went on weaving dogmatic statements until we now find ourselves enmeshed in them. We cannot make progress with them and we cannot free ourselves from them. Our helplessness is due to the fact that the Church long ago adopted the theory that

[1] Matt. 15:7-9.

no change could be made in the creeds except by the vote of a General Council. But as Christianity is so divided on doctrinal and other points that its several parts refuse to meet in such council, it is impossible to take any action. We have built up a system which is breaking down of its own weight. The Church has tried to be more orthodox than was Jesus himself. It has done nothing more than express a lack of faith in God and his truth. It has tried to safeguard God and his Church, lest he be discredited and it should perish. Or as Phillips Brooks once said in a similar connection: "These are the evil things which the spirit of orthodoxy does and is, all of which sum themselves up in this—that it is born of fear, and has no natural heritage either from hope or love." Meanwhile, the man in the street mocks, and many choice souls stay out of the fold. In the face of this desperate situation, one feels inclined to recommend that all creeds, articles, and confessions of faith be stored away in books for historical reference only, and that in public worship we use a simple declaration, after the form of the Shema, to the effect that *We believe that God is our Father; that Jesus hath revealed him, and that the Holy Spirit worketh in all the world.* On that statement, Catholic, Protestant, Unitarian and Jew could unite, and minor questions could be left to individual opinion.

From ancient times the ship has been used as a symbol of the Church, an apt figure. But there are many people to-day who are convinced that if the ship is to make headway it must jettison not a little of its dogmatic cargo.

A valiant and honored clergyman of the English Church has recently written: "Our Lord meant to simplify and not to complicate religion; not to perplex but to assist human nature, and above all to set man free; but ever since his time the corporations that have professed to extend his work have decided that his message needed intellectualizing if it was to be preserved and that his offer of freedom needed curtailing, and they have succeeded in doing both, even in the name of Jesus Christ." [1]

It is useless to point out that creedal expansion was due to the desire to combat heresy and to provide a basis for teaching; or that it was due to the Greek itch for metaphysical definitions. These are all true, but the reason for a statement or usage does not always justify its perpetuation.

The religion of Jesus is what the world needs, and his religion, like that of the Prophets and of all other men of vision, is ethical rather than philosophical. Dogma has ever been made a substitute for conduct, chiefly because it is easier to be orthodox

[1] "The Impatience of a Parson," by H. R. L. Sheppard, pp. 73 and 74.

than ethical. One is the broad way; the other is the narrow door.

That history repeats itself is a true proverb. The Scribes and Pharisees have been no less busy in the Christian than they were in the Jewish Church. They did not, at the rebuke of Jesus, cease to "shut up the kingdom of heaven against men."[1] And should he return to earth again, without doubt, his first work would be to throw down the theological stockade which they have built around his Church.

[1] Matt. 23: 13.

THE NEXT REFORMATION

CHAPTER V

THE NEXT REFORMATION

A new reformation is urgently needed, and is past due. Religion cannot live without constant growth. Its evolution is marked by the periodical sloughing off of obsolete elements and the taking on of new. History shows that whenever in the church this process has been resisted, religion has stagnated and deteriorated. On the other hand, after a release or reformation, it has always advanced with vigor.

Reformation becomes necessary whenever there is an accumulation of new truths or when errors and abuses afflicting the body become unbearable. Old views must be modified and related to the new information. Errors and abuses must be acknowledged and cast out, and a truer and higher form of expression adopted and practised. History shows that more than once the church has been saved and set forward by such an experience.

The first reformation was under the prophets of the eighth and subsequent centuries B. C. The primitive views that existed prior to the prophets had to

be reformed, old elements discarded and new ones adopted. This is clear to anyone who reads such books as Micah and Isaiah, wherein is plainly expressed the inadequacy of the then existing ideas of God, and also the defects in worship. To give an example: Micah says,

"Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

"Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Since truth is gradually revealed, and religion is an ever-growing plant, the work of the prophets was neither perfect nor final. They did much to improve the faith and practice of their time, but more would have to be done later to keep pace with truth. Furthermore, in religion no less than in biology, there is a tendency to revert to earlier conditions, and in the garden of truth rank weeds spring

up and choke the fruitful plant. Therefore, in the fullness of time religion came to need another reformation, and Jesus of Nazareth was God's instrument. He shows (Matthew 23) how the commandments of men and traditions of the elders had grown up as weeds and had choked the true word.

The work of Jesus was like that of the prophets—it was a reformation both in word and in spirit. He changed the language of religion in a startling way as is clearly shown by the comparison of the Gospels with the Pentateuch. That he changed the spirit also is evident when the declarations of the law are placed beside those of the Sermon on the Mount. (Vide St. Matt. 5.) Without such a comparison it is hard for us to appreciate how radical was the transformation which Jesus demanded.

The truth of religion is eternal. It does not differ in any degree from age to age. But it suffers from a meddlesomeness of men who try to guard it and explain it, and end in limiting it to their philosophy. Therefore, though religion is divine in its source and inspiration, it constantly suffers from human hands. Reformation in many respects means its release from the bondage in which men have placed it, that it may have free course in the world.

When Jesus came and "spake as never man spake," one would have thought that the world would have been satisfied with the pure beauty of his word and

the simplicity of his creed. On the contrary, men very soon began to amplify his doctrine, to define and to deduce until the straight path to God was lost in a maze of metaphysics. The disputations of the doctors were everywhere heard. The pride of ecclesiastics grew apace, and the presumption of councils recognized no bounds, until the fair creation of Christ became overlaid with the stucco of their vain philosophy. Doctrinal formulae were spun and woven into yokes. Homoousion and Homoiousion were hurled back and forth in bitterness among brethen. The creed of Jesus which could be expressed in less than a dozen words was then later expanded into creeds many and confessions many. The dark ages were dark chiefly because the light of the world was hidden under the ecclesiastical bushel. Consequently, in the sixteenth century religion had again to be rescued from superstition and from the evil practices of the institution which claimed to be its sole vehicle and voice. It is interesting to speculate upon what might have happened to religion had Tetzel and the ecclesiastical authority which sanctioned him, been allowed to go on unrebuked. But "he that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps." In his work God uses human instruments. In his preparation for the third great reformation he used John Wyclif and Martin Luther. The darkness needed to be dis-

pelled, and the money changers must again be cast out of the temple.

These things, written aforetime on the pages of history, "were written for our learning," and this is the present lesson: That what has been required at three stages of the life of religion has again become necessary.

Since the last reformation three centuries have elapsed, centuries that have brought to us a volume of new truth such as no similar period has ever yielded. In the physical sphere there have been revelations which have changed to a marvelous degree our views of the nature and action of the material universe; and a literary scholarship has sprung up which has thrown so much new light upon the Scriptures and the other records bearing upon our religious conceptions that a readjustment of our views and the restatement of our creeds and liturgies are necessary. For instance, one cannot, without distress of mind, say certain parts of the creeds and of the commandments, based as they are upon the creation stories of Genesis, and the Fall. And the ethics ascribed to God in the early Old Testament books are intolerable today. Fortunately, biblical scholarship shows that they need not be accepted, that they are due to the views of primitive man who had reached neither the scientific nor the ethical stage. He thought things

were what they seemed, and he gave God the same defective character that he himself possessed. The trouble today is that our creeds and liturgies give little intimation that we have learned these things, consequently, in their present form, they are stones of stumbling and rocks of offense to young and old.

The urgent need of this suggested reformation is evident not only from the considerations stated, but from the resultant religious conditions of today. A few examples will suffice. This nation which we call Christian numbers something like one hundred and fifteen million people. Church membership and church attendance are the accepted evidences of religious interest and allegiance, yet less than half of our population has any connection with organized religion. Churches are everywhere. Ministers and members call week by week to the others to join them in worship and in work. But the call falls upon deaf ears. The church has in a large measure lost its influence upon the world outside. It cannot hold the active allegiance of its own membership. Young people, particularly of the educated class, are less and less influenced by the church. With the majority of them, a few years of Sunday school attendance, and after that occasional presence at worship on high festivals mark the maximum of their corporate religious expression. Another serious matter is the increasing difficulty to secure young

men for the ministry. The supply is decreasing constantly both in numbers and in quality. The result of such conditions is that the congregations worshiping in the churches are on the average growing smaller year by year. Today a full church is the exception, and where one is found, it is often due to the personal power of the preacher rather than to enthusiasm for the institution. This is proved by the fact that in the vast majority of cases, where there is the absense of that pulpit power, the congregations are small. As inspiring and necessary as is good preaching, it is an unhealthy sign when it be comes the *sine qua non.*

It must be admitted that the indifference to religion today among the young and old is largely because in its liturgical expression there is too much that is archaic, unintelligible and ethically offensive. And in the creeds there is false astronomy, doubtful biology and debatable theology. To the modern mind that accepts the new learning, all of these things are a bar to co-operation and fellowship in church worship and church work. It is significant that in a recent clergy conference a college pastor made this statement: "The greatest problem of the church, as seen on the university campus, is to reinterpret the eternal verities of religious truth in terms of the intelligence and experience of our modern youth." That interpretation will come only

when the laity demand it. The spirit of *laissez faire* is too general among the clergy for vigorous action from them. There's the pity! For, if the "bishops and other clergy" of all estates and denominations would for one day cast expediency and fear to the winds and boldly declare what they really believe, the next reformation would immediately begin. Imprecatory psalms, unscientific astronomy, disputed metaphysics and primitive ethics would no longer be read nor proclaimed in the churches at the hours of worship of the God of truth. It would be evident to young and old that the church had heard of such men as Galileo, Newton and Darwin, and that it numbered them among the prophets.

Canon Raven in his book, *The Wanderer's Way*, has a statement much to the point:

"That the changes demanded by the scientific movement were not recognized by Christians twenty years ago will hardly be disputed: their scope is even now absurdly misconceived. It is not a question of a few specious glosses upon certain articles of the creed, or a mild revision of the forms of service, or a relaxation here and there of the traditional discipline. Those who suppose that they can meet the demands of the new age by reading the Revised Version, or rewriting the State Prayers, or dropping the Athanasian Creed, or sanctioning Reservation, or allowing prayers for the dead, are living in a world of their own. We want more than an Enabling Act and a

Deposited Prayer Book and a Doctrinal Commission. These things are desirable enough, and will be useful just so far as they are dictated by knowledge rather of the splendor of the new than of the defects of the old. As it is, they are largely the work of men who assume that the main characteristics of institutional religion stand irreformable and all that is necessary is to fit a few of the more obvious discoveries into the fabric of the existing structure. Scientists revolutionize traction by the invention of the petrol engine, and in a few years motor-cars and aeroplanes are evolved for it to drive. The church hears of the invention, gets rid of the horses from the family coach, fits an engine to it and fails to realize than the old body and wheels, even if set in motion, will be shaken to pieces in a mile or two. The coach was good in its day: the purpose of coach or car or plane is the same, to carry passengers on their road; but given new motive power, a new type of vehicle is essential. And the difference between horses and a motor engine is not greater than that between the pre-scientific and the modern concept of God."

It is time to ask the question: Does the church desire to win the world, or does it prefer to maintain ancient ideas and forms of expression? Is it an archaeological society only, or is it a living organism? It claims to be "the church of the Living God," of the God who says, "Behold, I make all things new."

To that divine process of renewal, antiquated liturgical and creedal expressions, however useful they may have been, must yield. If the church is to live and to do its God-given task this reformation must be made. The time is approaching.

When the next reformation comes it will be different in spirit from that of the 16th century. Luther and the other Protestants had to meet organized opposition in both the Roman and the Anglican Churches, and hostility from emperors and kings. Excommunication was a mild penalty for teaching the new views. Neither Church nor State could be expected to stop short of persecution, imprisonment, torture and death.

The spirit of Christ has since come into the lives of Christians to the extent that now tolerance and sympathy make even the mildest heresy trial almost impossible. Therefore, the movement for reformation will come from an earnest desire on the part of all Christians to disencumber religion from impeding accretions and to make it more easily understood and generally acceptable. To that end we may expect denominational bodies to appoint committees to confer with each other after the example of the recent Lausanne Conference on Faith and Order, and the international conferences on world peace.

When such meetings are held, divisive prejudices such as apostolical succession, predestination, verbal

inspiration of the Scriptures, baptism by immersion only, and perhaps others, which are already being discarded, will not obstruct the movement. The Church of Rome will either cooperate or will see the world gradually drift away from her influence and authority. There will be an agreement upon what the Christian religion really demands, to the discarding of many dogmatic deductions, which have hitherto been thought necessary to Church loyalty and final salvation. Hand-books and text-books will be written showing the thread of religious history in the Bible, and the subsequent life of the Church. Curricula will be provided which will make it possible to teach religion in a direct, comprehensive way, very different from the method of instruction which has been current in Sunday Schools and Bible Classes. At present there is great confusion of mind on this subject due to the jumble of odd lots of unrelated matter which have been picked up here and there.

With this more ordered knowledge of all that has to do with the Bible and the Church, religious faith and conviction will be based upon an intellectual grasp of the subject, and consequently an interest will be awakened and maintained because people will understand the history of religion and its bearing upon their lives.

The chief reason why religion has not won the world is because it has been presented in a haphazard manner, and often mispresented by ignorant teachers. The hopeful fact is that we now have the historical and textual information with the scholarship to clarify the records. With this scientific knowledge, and the improved methods of instruction, we only need the courage to discard that which is useless and obstructive, and to proclaim the valid and essential. Then we will "satisfy the soul of the saint without disgusting the intellect of the scholar." [1]

In this work we need not fear the charge of radicalism however drastic the changes may seem to be. For we have abundant precedent in the prophets of the 8th Century B. C., in Jesus, and the reformers of the 16th Century A. D. The old cry of the prophets and of Jesus is applicable to the present time, and should be on the lips of every aspiring Christian: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Valleys of richness must be lifted up, mountains of obstruction and offense must be brought low, the crooked ways of dogmatic deductions made straight, and the rough places of religious pride and bigotry made smooth, that all flesh may see the salvation of God.

[1] Kirsopp Lake, D.D., *Landmarks in the History of Early Christianity*, p. 9.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

SUGGESTED BOOKS

How We Got Our Bible, by John Paterson Smyth, published by James Pott.

An historical account of the Bible from the early manuscript of apostolic days down to the last version in our hands today. $1.00.

Human Nature in the Bible, by William Lyon Phelps, published by Charles Scribners' Sons.

The Bible described as a masterpiece of character delineation, one of the best revelations of men and women in all literature—going deepest into human nature. $2.00.

How to Know the Bible, by George Hodges, published by Bobbs Merrill.

A brief commentary on and history of the whole Bible in a scientific, scholarly and yet very simple manner. $2.50.

A Pilgrimage to Palestine, by Harry Emerson Fosdick, published by Macmillan.

A pageant of historical associations and an exhibit of the ramifications between the geographical features of Palestine and the contents of the Bible. $2.50.

The Modern Use of the Bible, by Harry Emerson Fosdick. Association Press.

New assurance in the continued use of the Bible as reinterpreted in the light of modern knowledge. $1.60.

BELIEFS THAT MATTER, by William Adams Brown. Association Press.

A statement of what one Christian believes may be a practicable faith for the men and women of today. $2.75.

CREEDS AND LOYALTY, by H. B. Washburn and others, published by Macmillan.

Essays on the history, interpretation and use of the Creeds. $1.50.

UNRAVELLING THE BOOK OF BOOKS, by Ernest R. Trattner, published by Charles Scribners' Sons.

The story of how the puzzles of the Bible were solved and its documents unravelled. $2.75.

THE PRESENT CRISIS IN RELIGION, by W. E. Orchard, published by Harper.

In a mystical approach to life, through recourse to prayer, Dr. Orchard sees religion restored to its rightful effectiveness. $2.50.

A JEWISH VIEW OF JESUS, by Hyman Gerson Enelow, published by Bloch.

A study of the revelation of Jesus to the Jews, considered from the Jewish point of view. $1.00.

CHRIST OF THE INDIAN ROAD, by E. Stanley Jones, published by Abingdon Press.

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Interpretations and translations of the original masterpiece. A brilliant work which not only throws a new

light on an age-long question, but is also a classic interpretation of a classic. $4.00.

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Being The Book of Ecclesiastes. A delightfully human book on the Omar Khayyam of the Bible, with a new and exact translation of the original text. $3.00.

The Faith of the Future, by James Henry Tuckwell, published by Methuen & Co. London.

A scholarly statement of the present religious unrest and perplexity. A solution offered from the standpoint of a believer in the New Thought. $1.25.

Ways of Sharing with Other Faiths, by Daniel Johnson Fleming, published by Association Press.

This book challenges thought in regard to the range of effort, the measure of ethical insight, and the educational validity in certain approaches to other faiths. It combines a re-examination of objectives and standards between religions with a spirit which is beyond question positive and constructive.

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